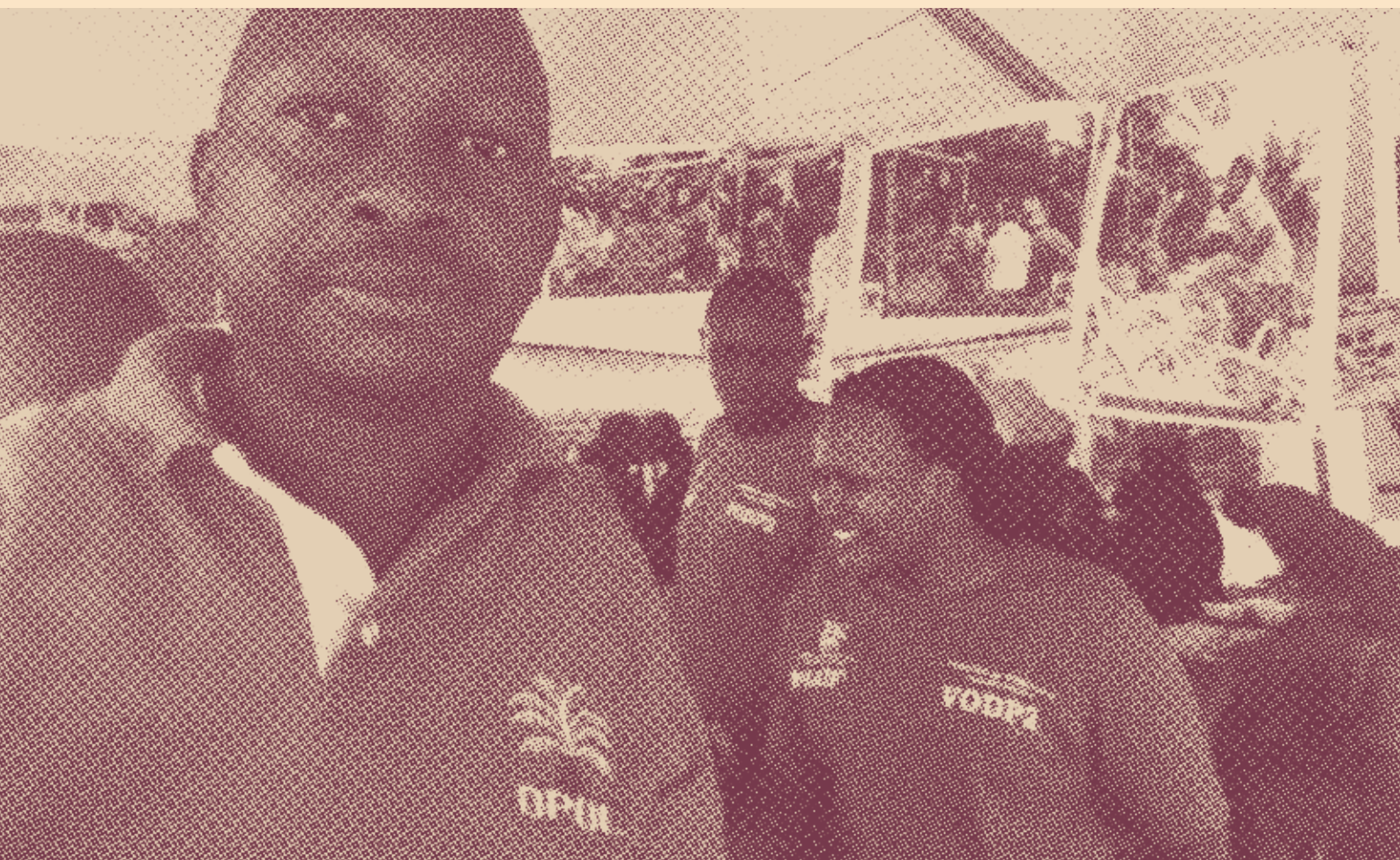


SHARING AS A FIRST STEP TO MAINSTREAM EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION

Anthony Wanyoto



Experience Capitalization goes beyond writing success stories. You have to critically reflect on your project, and also write down why things didn't turn out as planned.

Cover Sharing information at the National Agricultural Show, in Jinja

Right Staff members of the Vegetable Oil Development project in action. A field officer explains how the model works
(Photo: Charles Ssembateya)

At the Vegetable Oil Development Project in Uganda, under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, where I work, we strive to share outcomes from our projects with the broader public and with other ministries. We do this mainly through our website. I am the communications and knowledge management officer for this project, so sharing and messaging is particularly important to me.

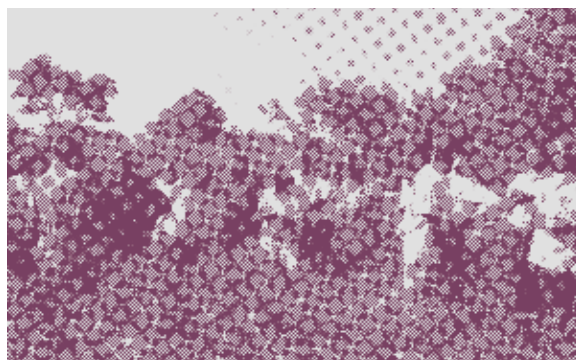
Over the past ten years, the Government of Uganda has been involved in the development of the vegetable oil sector with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In my capacity as a communication officer, I went with ten colleagues to meet others working on IFAD projects in the experience capitalization workshops organised by CTA in Kigali, Rwanda. Here I documented how a

farmers' cooperative got involved in producing and marketing oilseeds. In short, through the project, the people in the cooperative received training on production issues and group dynamics. Partnerships with industry and banks were established, and with their first profits, the cooperative invested in storage and post-harvest equipment. The experience capitalization process helped me to describe the project, the challenges faced, the innovations, and the impact it had on farmers.

An opportunity to share

I seized the opportunity to share my experience because I believe that a similar exercise should be a part of all IFAD projects, and of all development initiatives.

In May 2017, the IFAD Regional Implementation Workshop brought together policy makers and development practitioners involved with all of the IFAD-funded projects in eastern and southern Africa. The workshop theme was financial inclusion for rural transformation. It was the first time I was invited to join such a meeting, and I was looking forward to the networking opportunity. Besides the main theme for the workshop, breakout sessions were organised, and I was keen to participate in the one about experience capitalization.





I started by putting up A2-size posters at a strategic point in the hallway of the workshop venue. This way, when people were on their way to the breakout sessions they saw my posters. My posters clearly outlined the steps one takes when doing experience capitalization. I illustrated these with my own experience with the process by showing the different types of information I had collected, analysed and organised for my story about oil seeds. Viewers of the posters were taken, step-by-step, through an experience capitalization process.

Besides the posters, I had copies of the finished product, my story, to share at the workshop. Both the posters, and my story were useful during the breakout session when I explained what experience capitalization involves. Amongst the group there were people from different ministries, the private sector, farmer organisations and IFAD staff, most of whom had never been exposed to experience capitalization. Some were enthusiastic afterwards, some were still a

bit hesitant. The latter told me that it sounded like a good process, but that it was not completely clear how to use it in practice. I take their hesitance as a continued challenge to keep promoting the value of experience capitalization, but also to expose as many people as possible to the methods and the art of the process.

Organising in-house training

Convincing people that it is worthwhile and teaching them how to do it are two sides of the same coin when it comes to mainstreaming experience capitalization. I have also taken up these challenges with my colleagues at the Project Management Unit.

If experience capitalization becomes part of the regular Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) sessions of a project that we already engaged in, it won't be too time consuming. This is why I decided to convince the M&E team to incorporate experience capitalization

Above Collecting information in the field, and hearing about the soybean seed multiplication process (Photo: Charles Ssembateya)

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into their planning. But with this change to the way we want to work, we also need the knowledge and skills to match. In order to get everybody to reflect on their work in such a detailed way, we will have to start by training ourselves in the office.

I presented my lessons learned in the workshops in Kigali and Arusha to my colleagues and they responded enthusiastically. One of my key messages was that experience capitalization is not just something for communications officers. And, involving and training as many people as possible does not have to be costly. The FAO online learning module is free of charge, and you can follow it at your own pace.

So far, three coordinators in our office, who are responsible for the Vegetable Oil Development Project, will be trained in experience capitalization at an appropriate time. I will ask the project manager to ensure that we include training on experience capitalization in our plans for the next financial year. With this, I hope to train another 10 to 15 project

officers. As a communications and knowledge management officer I will be available to assist my colleagues with the whole process, including the writing part. When experience capitalization is a team effort and not just an issue for the communications officers, I am sure we will have plenty of interesting and “all inclusive” stories to share.



Anthony Wanyoto works as Communication and Knowledge Management Officer at the Vegetable Oil Development Project under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda. His article was published in 2018 under the collection looking at the public, private, producer partnerships in East Africa.

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